



Frequently Asked Questions:

Q: What conditions must be met before a property would be considered buyable by Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and turned into green space?

A: The property would have to be eligible to be purchased under the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP). FEMA has historically allocated funds annually under this program. For more information please visit <http://www.fema.gov/government/grant/hmgp/index.shtm>. Properties proposed to be purchased under this program must complete nationally for the funds available every year. A rule of thumb is that the flood waters must be above your finished floor and cause damage at least every five years to have a high enough priority to be considered. You also need to understand that FEMA usually provides 75% of the cost to purchase and demolish the structures on the properties. The City requires the property owner to be responsible for the remaining 25%.

Q: How does the City determine what it will maintain?

A: The Stormwater Policy is posted online at <http://www.sandyspringsga.org/City-Departments/Public-Works/Policies-and-Documents/Public-Works-Policy-Documents>. Drainage structures inside the road Right of Way are maintained by the City. Maintenance responsibility of the drainage system on private property must be determined on a case by case basis. Relevant documents used in this legal determination include final subdivision plats, recorded easements, zoning documents, covenants and ordinances in place at the time the property was developed. A legal determination is made based on these documents as to who has maintenance responsibilities.

Q: Why is the City of Sandy Springs proposing new flood zone maps placing property owners that were never in a flood zone to now be in the proposed flood zone?

A: Sandy Springs is part of the Metropolitan North Georgia Water Planning District. The District is comprised of 15 counties surrounding Atlanta and the over 90 cities located within those counties. Please visit <http://www.northgeorgiawater.com/html/index.htm> for information about the District. One of the three District master plans that the City must comply with is the District-wide Watershed Master Plan. This plan has several mandatory measures.

One of the requirements is that the City adopts and enforces a Floodplain Management Ordinance equivalent to the model ordinance. This ordinance requires that City regulate development in the floodplain on streams with a drainage area of 100 acres or larger. In order to regulate development in these areas, the City must determine what is the floodplain on streams up to 100 acres or larger. The City recommends that properties that are not currently in the effective FEMA floodplain purchase floodplain insurance now because the rates will be cheaper for properties that had flood insurance prior to the new maps becoming effective. In addition, the City has a duty to inform its citizens of potential danger.

Q: Do these proposed flood zone map changes reflect actual, present conditions or future anticipated conditions?

A: The proposed floodplain map changes submitted to Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) reflect actual, present conditions.

Q: What was the method used to determine the new proposed floodplain?

A: The best available data from previous surveys and maps on existing land use, topography, and aerial photography was used. A nationally recognize firm was select to begin the study in January 2009, well before the flood in September 2009. They used Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) approved methods and models to determine the floodplain elevations and map them. The City put an article on the City web page on June 4, 2010 to inform the public about the planned revisions. Please see <http://www.sandyspringsga.org/Newsroom/News/Sandy-Springs-to-Assess-Floodplain-Redraws-Maps>. The article invites the reader to visit www.georgiadfirm.com for additional information about Georgia's map modernization project. For more information about flood insurance, the reader is referred to www.floodsmart.gov.

Q: Was the process used to determine the proposed floodplain done equitably throughout Sandy Springs?

A: Yes. The consultant was hired to study the entire City using the same methodology throughout.

Q: Is someone in the floodplain because they got flooded?

A: The determination of the floodplain is not based on whether people were recently flooded. The study was started in January 2009, well before the flood in September 2009. The flooding that occurred in Sandy Springs was not equivalent to the 100-year flood. For example, there is a stream gage in Nancy Creek just outside the City limits operated by the United States Geological Service. That gage has been in operation for about 50 years. The flood on September 22, 2009 was the fourth highest flood of record. The highest flood of record was 12/1/1970. The lowest recorded flow was 10/2/2007. Who knows what weather the next 50 years will bring? The proposed 100-year floodplain was based on a study of streams with a drainage area greater than 100 acres using standard engineering methods that are approved by Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).

Q: Under what circumstances would the City of Sandy Springs amend their flood zone map submittal to remove and return a non-flood zone property back to this status?

A: A property owner would need to provide data and calculations by a professional engineer that shows that the calculations and mapping by our consultant are not correct. FEMA has a formal appeal process that property owners can follow to provide additional data such as elevations certificates or studies to show that they are not in the floodplain. The formal process will not start until the maps are published for comment which is expected in July of 2011. Prior to that time, the property owner can submit their studies or data to the City for appeal.

Q: How does the city rank Capital Improvement Projects (CIP)/Stormwater Maintenance Projects and what does that mean for the problem that I am experiencing?

A: Projects must first be determined to be the maintenance responsibility of the City. Then projects are ranked by risk. A problem in a high traveled road is a greater risk than one in a local cul-de-sac street. Problems in the street or next to buildings are a higher priority than one in a yard. A problem that does not affect the function or capacity of the drainage structure does not rank as high as one that does. Projects are ranked on a scale of 1 to 10 with 10 being the highest priority. Projects with higher priority are worked on first.

Things you can do to help:

Q: What can I do to help prevent stormwater pollution?

A: There are ten things you can do-

1. Never dump anything on the street, down a storm drain or in a drainage ditch.
2. Scoop up after your pet. Bag the refuse and dispose of it in the trash.
3. Compost grass clippings and leaves or bag them for curbside collection. Do not blow them into the street.
4. Use fertilizers and pesticides sparingly. Do not apply them on paved areas.
5. Check your vehicles for leaks and repair them.
6. Reduce, reuse and recycle cleaning and maintenance chemicals used at home.
7. Recycle motor oil and other vehicle fluids.
8. Put litter in its place.
9. Wash cars at a commercial car wash or on a grassy area and not your driveway.
10. Tell a friend or neighbor about how to prevent stormwater pollution and get involved.

For more information please see our brochure "When it Rains it Pollutes" on our web page under documents at the bottom of the page www.sandyspringsga.org/stormwater.

Q: What can I do to care for the stream on my property?

A: The City does not maintain ditches and streams on private property. However, here are some ideas that will help you care for your stream.

1. Never mow to the edge of a stream or lake; let the buffer develop naturally.
2. Plant appropriate native vegetation and cuttings in the buffer zone.
3. Don't dump anything in a stream, including grass clippings and other yard waste. Try home composting instead.
4. Keep the water body clean by removing trash...
5. Leave natural woody debris in a stream. It provides habitat and food for aquatic communities.
6. Use pesticides and fertilizers sparingly in your yard and not at all in the buffer.
7. Keep septic systems in good working order to prevent contaminated runoff.
8. Don't change the course of a stream or try to use rocks or other materials to stop stream bank erosion yourself. You can do more harm than good.

For more information please see our brochure "Stream Buffer Management" on our web page under documents at the bottom of the page www.sandyspringsga.org/stormwater.

Q: How do I dispose of hazardous household wastes?

A: There are two primary ways to reduce household hazardous wastes:

1. Think Prevention First!
2. Then, Recycle and Dispose of Wastes Properly!

For more information please see our brochure "Prevent Water Pollution from Hazardous Wastes" on our web page under documents at the bottom of the page www.sandyspringsga.org/stormwater.

Q: How do I keep my sanitary sewers from getting clogged?

A: Fats, Oils and Grease (FOG) are by-products of many foods and they need to be disposed of properly to avoid clogs in our sanitary sewers. Think of FOG as "hardening of the arteries." When cholesterol builds up in the human bloodstream, it causes a heart attack. When FOG hardens in the sewer it causes a sanitary system overflow. The easiest way to prevent clogs is don't pour FOG down the drain, dispose of it properly.

For more information please see our brochure "FOG - Fats, Oils and Grease" on our web page under documents at the bottom of the page www.sandyspringsga.org/stormwater.